

Painting (Thangka)

Date

late 20th Century

Primary Maker

Tibetan

Medium

Distemper on linen cloth, silk brocade and metal

Description

This is a thangka, a narrative painting that was made in Tibet to illustrate Buddhist teachings to a predominantly illiterate public. This painting depicts the meditation diagram for becoming young again. In the top right we see an old man who followed all the teachings and reclaimed his youth. The top left also shows the basic needs of a person to regain their youth: alcohol, grain, salt, medicine and sugar. Other aspects of the work also

speak to this central theme. The bottommost section depicts the six realms; beginning on the left top and going counterclockwise, they are: the realm of the gods, the realm of humans, the realm of hungry ghosts, the realm of hell, the realm of animals and the realm of demigods. In the center there are five Buddhas with their wives that represent the five elements and specific deities associated to those elements: yellow for Earth, white for water, red for fire, green for air, and white for space. These Buddhas' placement is flipped of what it usually would be. Each deity is in the opposite spot than they usually would be—except for the central white one—although these directions vary depend on the specific tradition of teaching. The eight figures around the center may be the Medicine Buddhas. All the Buddhas shown in the center of this painting have lines that are drawn from them to different Medicine Buddhas, as well as drawn to different realms along the bottom. It seems to connect them, though the reason and meaning of this remains unclear.

Dimensions

60 1/2 × 47 × 2 in. (153.7 × 119.4 × 5.1 cm)

